

# **Latin American Workers and the Struggle for Social Justice**

**William J. Mello, Ph.D.**

**Irene Quiero -Tajalli, Ph.D.**

**Indiana University School of Social Work/ Labor Studies Program  
Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis**

## **Abstract**

Working class movements for social justice, such as Argentina's Piqueteiro movement and Brazil's Landless Peasant Movement (MST) have become permanent aspects of Latin American society. One of the most significant aspects of the struggle against neo-liberal globalization in Latin America was the upsurge of social movements, contesting market driven sociopolitical transformations imposed during the early 1990s. These movements joined labor, community and grassroots political organizations that were the mainstay behind the recent victories of progressive governments, popularly known as Latin Americas "pink revolution." In this sense the process of political and social transformation has taken activists to adopt a model of contestation (mobilization) and political mediation (institutional negotiations) which moves unevenly through the structures of power and affects long term movement objectives. The constraints of market interests stand in permanent conflict with the movements long term sociopolitical objectives placing a new set of questions for anti-globalization social movements which will not easily be resolved and will shape their future objectives and strategies in years to come.

The poster presentation, based on findings from quantitative research, will encapsulate the main socio-political factors leading to the gradual formation of these two movements, their struggles against the mechanisms of national and international oppression; organizing strategies, empowering projects of mutual support, and the role of the university.

The presentation will incorporate researchers' preliminary questions leading to their research projects, including "Why do the oppressed have to resort to civil disobedience to get their rights?" the theoretical underpinnings of the projects, the research design, and findings.

This presentation is timely given the current struggle of the working class in this country, particularly in Wisconsin and Indiana.